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STATIA WITH A PAST

This picture shows St. Eustatius - Statia for short - of the West Indies, a quaint old Dutch possession. Back in the days of our revolutionary ancestors, Statia was a free port and a storehouse for the world's treasures. But her wealth was her undoing. In 1781 the English seized her and staged on her shores the greatest auction ever known. The ruined warehouses still strew the beach. The time-worn cistern still serves its original purpose but the islanders tell of a tragic night when it proved a trap for the unwary. Two sailors, sole survivors of the good ship "Mary Ann" fought their way through a pounding surf only to be flung at last, exhausted, into the cistern where they drowned. The ancient guns of Statia still shown to the wayfarer fired the first foreign salute to the American flag November 16, 1776. Oranjestad, the only town on the island, sprawls sleepily over the cliffs and down onto the beach. We are shown a native wedding, and later as guests of the Governor and his daughter we were treated to a whelk roast. These shell fish, gathered by the natives on the sea-swept rocks, are one of the island's peculiar delicacies. We are shown the jagged cliffs on the windward side of the island where Nature has provided a whistling buoy whose weird warning to mariners can be heard above the roar of the surf. Later we climbed up the side of Paai to the lip of an ancient crater, but discovered that even the volcanoes in Statia are moss grown and out of commission.

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